

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A walking beam assembly, comprising:

a pair of axles in parallel spaced relation, at least one of the pair of axles being a drop axle having end portions and an intermediate portion that extends between the end portions, the intermediate portion dropping down and having a secondary axis which is offset from and substantially parallel to a primary axis provided by the end portions; and

a pair of walking beams extending in parallel spaced relation between the pair of axles, each walking beam having opposed ends, a central transverse pivot axis intermediate the opposed ends, and a longitudinal pivot axis, the opposed ends of each walking beam being secured via connectors on top of the intermediate portion of the at least one drop axle adjacent one of the end portions, each of the connectors allowing limited pivotal movement about the longitudinal pivot axis of the walking beam;

- < each of the connectors being a cylindrical pin surrounded by a bushing,
- < each cylindrical pin rotating relative to the bushing to accommodate movement,
- < each cylindrical pin being co-extensive with the longitudinal pivot axis; and
- < each of the pair of walking beams being a drop walking beam with an
- < intermediate portion along a top edge that drops down from the end portions, the
- < central transverse pivot axis of the walking beams being positioned lower than
- < the longitudinal pivot axis.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A walking beam assembly, comprising:

a pair of drop axles in parallel spaced relation, each of the drop axles having end portions and an intermediate portion that extends between the end portions, the intermediate portion dropping down and having a secondary axis which is offset from and substantially parallel to a primary axis provided by the end portions; and

a pair of walking beams extending in parallel spaced relation between the pair of drop axles, each walking beam having opposed ends, a central transverse pivot axis intermediate the opposed ends, and a longitudinal pivot axis, the opposed ends of each walking beam being secured via connectors on

top of the intermediate portion of the drop axles adjacent one of the end portions, each of the connectors allowing limited pivotal movement about the longitudinal pivot axis of the walking beam;

- < each of the connectors is a cylindrical pin positioned on the longitudinal
- < pivot axis and surrounded by a resilient cylindrical bushing, the cylindrical pin
- < rotating relative to the bushing to accommodate movement, the bushing being
- < encased in a two part bushing housing;
- < mounting plates being positioned on top of the intermediate portion of
- < each drop axle, each of the mounting plates having bolt receiving apertures,
- < each of the cylindrical pins being secured in position by engaging the two part
- < bushing housing, extending through the apertures and secured by nuts; and
- < the cylindrical pin having a threaded end with a nut threaded onto the
- < threaded end of the cylindrical pin, thereby facilitating the use of washers as
- < shims on either side of the bushing.

3. (ORIGINAL) The walking beam assembly as defined in Claim 2, further including means to secure the walking beams in a longitudinal orientation to a frame of a vehicle for pivotal movement about the central transverse pivot axis.

4-6. (CANCELLED)

- < 7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A walking beam assembly, comprising:
- < a pair of drop axles in parallel spaced relation, each of the drop axles
- < having end portions and an intermediate portion that extends between the end
- < portions, the intermediate portion dropping down and having a secondary axis
- < which is offset from and substantially parallel to a primary axis provided by the
- < end portions;
- < a pair of walking beams extending in parallel spaced relation between the
- < pair of drop axles, each walking beam having opposed ends, a central
- < transverse pivot axis intermediate the opposed ends, and a longitudinal pivot
- < axis, the opposed ends of each walking beam being secured via connectors on
- < top of the intermediate portion of the drop axles adjacent one of the end

- < portions, each of the connectors allowing limited pivotal movement about the
- < longitudinal pivot axis of the walking beam; and
- < each of the connectors consisting of resilient flexible elements which
- < deform to accommodate movement, including ~~The walking beam assembly as~~
- < ~~defined in Claim 6, wherein each of the connectors is comprised of an upper~~
resilient element and a lower resilient element with one of the opposed ends of
one of the walking beams sandwiched in between.

8. (ORIGINAL) The walking beam assembly as defined in Claim 3, wherein the means to secure the walking beams in a longitudinal orientation to a vehicle frame, includes a pair of suspension arms, each suspension arm having a pivotal connection at one end adapted for pivotally securing the suspension arm to the vehicle frame, a support bracket for pivotally supporting the walking beams for pivotal movement about the central transverse pivot axis, and shock absorbers adapted to be disposed between the suspension arm and the vehicle frame.

9. (CANCELLED)

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The walking beam assembly as defined
- < in Claim ~~[[9]]~~ 1, wherein each of the pair of walking beams is "W" shaped.

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The walking beam assembly as defined
- < in Claim 8, wherein ~~hydraulic shock absorbers~~ air springs are used to dampen movement of each of the suspension arm s.

12. (ORIGINAL) The walking beam assembly as defined in Claim 2, wherein hydraulic shock absorbers are used to dampen movement of each of the walking beams.

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) The walking beam assembly as defined
- < in Claim ~~[[2]]~~ 11, wherein at least one levelling valve is provided to allow air to be
 - < added or removed from one of driver's side or passenger side air ~~[[bags]]~~
 - < springs, whereby the vehicle frame is levelled.

14. (CANCELLED)

< [[11.]] 15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A walking beam assembly, comprising:

a first drop axle and a second drop axle, each of the first drop axle and the second drop axle having a first end portion, a second end portion, and an intermediate portion that extends between the first end portion and the second end portion, the first end portion and the second end portion supporting wheel mountings which are adapted to receive wheels, the intermediate portion dropping down and having a secondary axis which is offset from and substantially parallel to a primary axis provided by the first end portion and the second end portion;

< a ~~shaped~~ first walking beam and a second walking beam arranged in parallel spaced relation, each walking beam being "W" shaped and having a first end, a second end, a central transverse pivot axis intermediate the first end and
< the second end and a longitudinal pivot axis, the central transverse pivot axis of
< the walking beams being positioned lower than the longitudinal pivot axis;

a first end of the first walking beam being secured via a connector on top of the intermediate portion of the first drop axle adjacent the first end portion, a second end of the first walking beam being secured via a connector on top of the intermediate portion of the second drop axle adjacent to the first end portion;

a first end of the second walking beam being secured via a connector on top of the intermediate portion of the first drop axle adjacent the second end portion, a second end of the second walking beam being secured via a connector on top of the intermediate portion of the second drop axle adjacent to the second end portion;

< ~~mounting plates positioned onto the top of the intermediate portion of each~~
< ~~drop axle, each of the mounting plates having bolt receiving apertures, each of~~
< ~~the connectors being secured in position by bolts extending through the~~
< ~~apertures and secured by nuts;~~

< ~~each of the connectors allowing limited pivotal movement about the~~
 < ~~longitudinal pivot axis of one of the first walking beam and the second walking~~
 < ~~beam;~~

< each of the connectors is a cylindrical pin positioned on the longitudinal
 < pivot axis and surrounded by a resilient cylindrical bushing, the cylindrical pin
 < rotating relative to the bushing to accommodate movement, the bushing being
 < encased in a two part bushing housing;

< mounting plates being positioned on top of the intermediate portion of
 < each drop axle, each of the mounting plates having bolt receiving apertures,
 < each of the cylindrical pins being secured in position by bolts positioned
 < engaging the two part bushing housing, extending through the apertures and
 < secured by nuts;

< the cylindrical pin having a threaded end with a nut threaded onto the
 < threaded end of the cylindrical pin, thereby facilitating the use of washers as
 < shims on either side of the bushing; and

means to secure the walking beams in a longitudinal orientation to a vehicle frame for pivotal movement about the central transverse pivot axis, including a pair of suspension arms, each suspension arm having a pivotal connection at one end adapted for pivotally securing the suspension arm to the vehicle frame, a support bracket for pivotally supporting the walking beams for
 < pivotal movement about the central transverse pivot axis, and ~~shock absorbers~~
 < air springs adapted to be disposed between the suspension arm and the vehicle frame.

16-17. (CANCELLED)